Crow's been there, done that track

Countless numbers of drivers have turned laps at Saugus Speedway during its 54-year history, but few have made the trip like local product Rick Crow.

The 30-year-old Canyon Country resident will become the first driver in recent times to race in every division at Saugus when he climbs into his Grand American Modified car tonight.

From Jalopy to Sportsman, after tonight, the 10-year racing veteran can honestly boast, "been there, seen it, done that," as they do in the popular soft drink commercial.

"It feels good," said Crow of racing in every class. "I always told myself I wanted to keep moving up."

Or down. Or sideways. Or whatever it takes to race at Saugus Speedway.

"It's a lot of fun," said Crow, who has moved through the ranks in five different divisions. "I've been racing around here since I was six weeks old. I grew up here and my parents used to take me there all the time. I've been smoking into the pits since I was 15 years old.

"I just try to have a good time and talk to everybody. Since I've been in every division it's given me an opportunity to get to know a lot of people. I like to help everybody."

It has paid off, particularly in the past two seasons.

Pro Crow, who has like many, operates on a very limited budget, his friendships have helped put him in racing and enabled him to shift divisions with relative ease.

Crow's latest move had been planned for two years now. His friend Gerri Cronsalp, who races in both the Pro Stock and Grand Am Stock divisions, Crow entered the Pro Stock division this season with the sole purpose of showcasing his talent so he could sell it. He was running third in the points standings after three nights of racing when he sold his car and applied the money toward a used IMCA car built by defending Sportsman champion Gary Ingram.

He's also received considerable help from another friendship driver, Lee Ladd. Ladd helped Crow out in the pits during the inaugural Saugus Western State Series at the close of last season.

Ladd returned the favor this season with financial help, which enabled Crow to reach his goal of driving a Grand Am car.

The most astonishing thing about Crow's racing career, which opened with three years in the super-diluted Jalopy class in 1984, is his adaptability, especially considering how little help in the pits.

It's not unusual to see Crow changing a tire or making an adjustment to his car, either himself or with his lose pit member, neighbor Brent MacKay.

That's likely to be the case tonight when Crow takes his Grand Am to the Grand Am car prior to qualifying.

"It's my first time and we're just going to wait and see," Crow said. "I figure it'll take me one night to get the hang of it."

Much the same way he has in other divisions.

Since 1984, he's made a successful transition from racing Jalopies to Hobby Stock, Street Stock/Pro Stock and Sportsman, winning a race in each class.

Crow's biggest year came in 1989 when he won five main events and established the Street Stock oval track record en route to rookie of the year honors.

That is an experience Crow feels he's ready to duplicate.

"I know I can compete with these guys," said Crow of the Grand Am division. "I've been racing against them in other divisions for years. This is very good car. I feel a lot more confident about winning now than I did in my Pro Stock car."

Whether he can hold his own remains to be seen, but Crow does not lack confidence.

"This division needs me," joked Crow, whose pink car should be hard to miss. "They need a driver in a pink car, under thing with a little bit of flash."

Ron R. Stapp is a freelance writer. His motor sports column appears every Saturday.